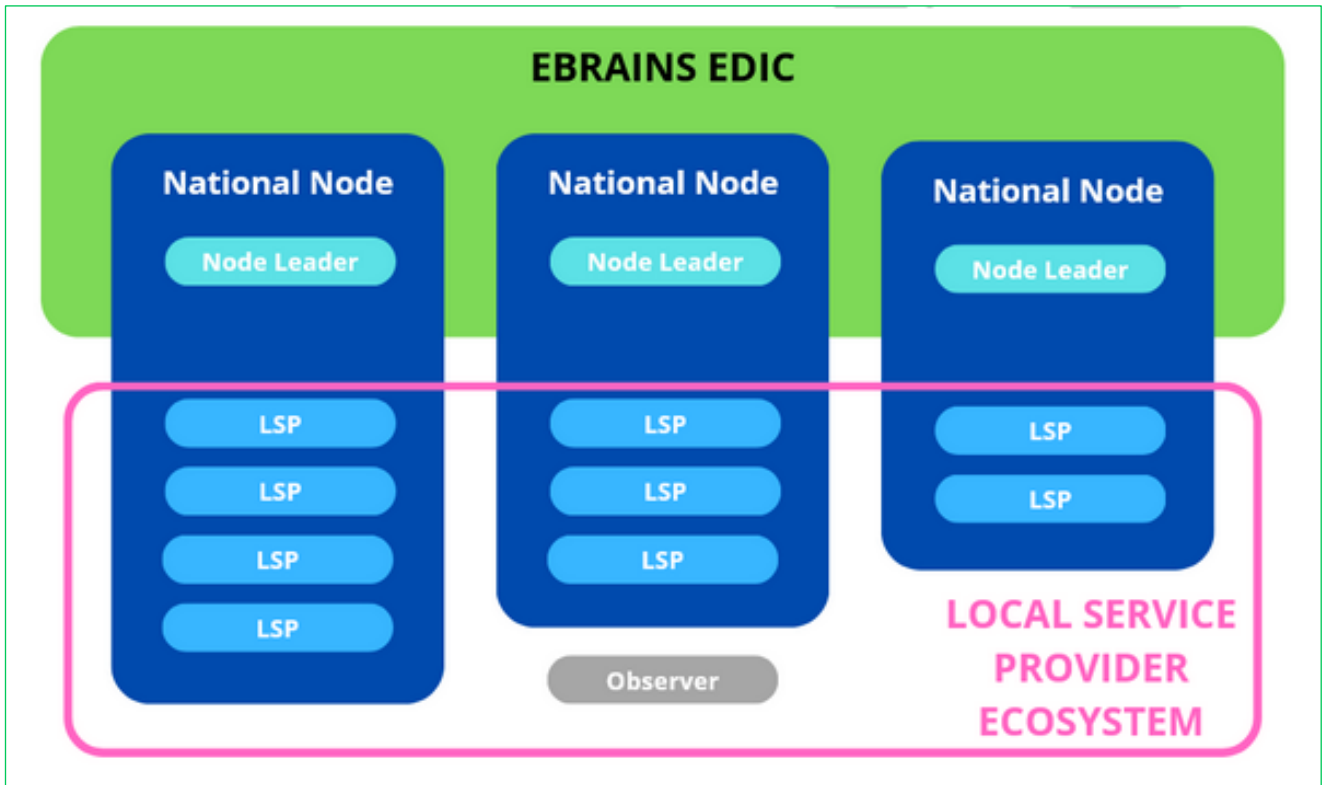


**EBRAINS 2.0**

**D7.1 Ecosystem Memorandum of Understanding**



**Figure 1: Loc Structure and relations between EBRAINS EDIC, LSPE and NNs**

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<b>Keywords:</b>	Brain research, digital research infrastructure, distributed infrastructure, service delivery, sustainability		
<b>Abstract:</b>	<p>This Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) establishes the framework for collaboration between EBRAINS EDIC, its affiliated National Nodes (NNs), and Local Service Providers (LSPs), forming the Local Service Provider Ecosystem (LSPE). The purpose of the LSPE is to deliver integrated, strategic, and human-centered services in neuroscience research and innovation through EBRAINS, while fostering cross-border collaboration and capacity building across Europe.</p>		

## Table of Contents

<b>1. Background</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>2. Purpose</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>3. Objectives and Scope</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>4. Definitions, Roles and Responsibilities</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>5. Sustainability</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>6. LSPE Governance and Coordination</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>7. Other Terms of Agreement</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>8. Signatures</b> .....	<b>10</b>
Memorandum of Understanding “Enlarged EBRAINS Local Service Providers Ecosystem” .....	10

## Table of Figures

Figure 1: Loc Structure and relations between EBRAINS EDIC, LSPE and NNs .....	1
Table 1: Acronyms .....	4

**Table 1: Acronyms**

Acronym	
ASLA	Accessory Service Level Agreement
EDIC	European Digital Infrastructure Consortium
JRU	Joint Research Unit
LSP(s)	Local Service Provider(s)
LSPE	Local Service Provider Ecosystem
NN	National Node
NNA	National Node Agreement
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding

## 1. Background

The European Commission funded the FET Flagship Human Brain Project (HBP) during the decade 2011–2023. The ultimate objective of the HBP funding is to “develop an integrated, multi-level understanding of the structure and function of the brain through the development and use of ICT tools”. This objective is realized through the creation of an ICT platform that integrates data, technologies, and services to support the scientific community in the long term, extending beyond the duration of the HBP project.

Under the Specific Grant Agreement 2 (SGA2) — from April 1, 2018, to March 31, 2020 — the integrated web platform of the HBP was named “EBRAINS” (European Brain ReseArch INfraStructure).

On April 1, 2020, the funding phase called Specific Grant Agreement 3 (SGA3) of the HBP. A strategy was also defined for managing EBRAINS as a European research infrastructure, with the aim of being included in the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructure (ESFRI) Roadmap 2021, and all necessary steps were undertaken to achieve this.

On August 23, 2019, the non-profit international association under Belgian law (AISBL) “EBRAINS” was established in Brussels to manage the research infrastructure developed under the HBP. The association was officially recognized by Belgian Royal Decree on December 5, 2019.

From 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2026, under the HORIZON-INFRA-2022-SERV-B-01 Programme, the EBRAINS 2.0 programme was established, with the overarching goal to further consolidate the Research Platform and to foster a deeper understanding of brain structure and function with dedicated and mature software tools.

EBRAINS is now expected to transition in the next few years into a European Digital Infrastructure Consortium (EDIC) to consolidate and extend its core services.

While the EBRAINS EDIC will be focused on providing services of digital nature, the broader EBRAINS community - which includes physical laboratories, data production facilities, training hubs, and research groups spread across multiple countries - offers critical complementary capabilities for other types of services.

The Local Service Provider Ecosystem (LSPE) is designed to leverage these capabilities by integrating Local Service Providers (LSPs) into a collaborative international ecosystem that supports and enhances the EBRAINS platform.

## 2. Purpose

This Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) should be regarded as a living document until the establishment of EBRAINS EDIC, at which point the MoU will be finalized and ready for signature.

This MoU aims to expand the range of services available through EBRAINS, by offering accessory services integrated with the EBRAINS platform in addition to the digital services. These human-centered and physical services rely on competence and availability of the LSPE.

This MoU outlines the relation, roles and responsibilities of the EBRAINS EDIC and each Local Service Provider, in order to promote interoperability and integration among neuroscience institutions, facilitate strategic collaborations for research, development, training, and policy impact.

This MoU also enables and encourages LSPs to collectively pursue EU and national funding opportunities, in a coordinated and standardized manner. To better ensure successful applications to funding calls, this agreement proposes that the EBRAINS EDIC commits to participate into funding call consortia as a partner and endorser.

Additionally, this MoU establishes that service provided to EBRAINS by the LSPs can either be 1) voluntary and free of charge 2) reimbursed and with no profit margin, with the LSP responsible for budgeting and reporting of expenses 3) in the case of services to the private sector, covered by fees which are autonomously determined by the LSP.

This MoU is non-binding and does not create legal obligations. It reflects the goodwill and intent of the parties to collaborate and contribute to the strategic goals of the EBRAINS EDIC. This MoU is valid for a period of three (3) years from the date of the latest signature and is renewable upon mutual agreement. Amendments must be made in writing and approved by the EBRAINS EDIC and the affected parties.

This MoU is an outcome of the EBRAINS 2.0 Workpackage 7, Task 7.4 and Task 7.7.

### 3. Objectives and Scope

The agreement between the EBRAINS EDIC, members of the LSPE and NN representatives aims to:

- Expand the range of services available through EBRAINS, hereby named as “accessory services”, as outlined by the Local Service Provider Ecosystem Position Paper<sup>1</sup>. These integrated services include:
  - strategic data production and strategic model production, including but not limited to high-resolution imaging, simulation tools, and novel experimental datasets.
  - training, education and professional development programs, including in person workshops, conferences, and training schools.
  - community building, outreach and public engagement across various audiences, including but not limited to traditional media (local and international), science fairs and festivals, and social media.
  - innovation, technology transfer, and acceleration through collaboration with industry and private sector.
  - co-designed, community-based, and interdisciplinary services involving outside stakeholders (patients associations, local communities etc.)
  - other cross-node and cross-national projects aligned with EBRAINS' scientific roadmap.
- Foster a climate of international scientific collaboration by leveraging the connections established during the HBP - EBRAINS initiatives.
  - LSPs are encouraged to form consortia to pursue national and European funding opportunities aligned with EBRAINS' mission.
  - EBRAINS EDIC, in turn, commits to act as an official partner or endorsing institution in collaborative funding calls proposed by LSPE members.
  - Working groups may be created within LSPE to match expertise and coordinate proposal writing for targeted calls. Collaboration history and synergies across the LSPE will be documented to support proposal strength and eligibility.
- Ensure seamless interoperability between all parties involved in the agreement, through the adoption of common guidelines, workflows and reporting templates.
  - Integration into the EBRAINS digital research platform is required for LSPE membership.
  - Guidance and support for data compliance and technological readiness will rely on the outcome of EBRAINS HORIZON-INFRA-2022-SERV-B-01, specifically the work of WP4
  - All services and datasets must comply with EBRAINS data harmonization and interoperability standards.
  - LSPs will contribute to and adopt common workflows, metadata structures, and validation protocols.

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<sup>1</sup> See Task 7.4 deliverable

## 4. Definitions, Roles and Responsibilities

- **EBRAINS EDIC:** The central governance body responsible for managing the digital infrastructure and coordinating service delivery to external uses across the ecosystem. The EBRAINS EDIC will:
  - Maintain the digital platform for service delivery.
  - Coordinate service requests from external users via the Central Hub.
  - Approves and manages Accessory Service Level Agreements with LSPs.
  - Provide metadata integration, listing of services and LSPs in the EBRAINS Knowledge Graph.
  - Represent the LSPE in policy forums and EU-level funding joint applications.
- **Local Service Provider (LSP):** A research institute, facility hub, or competence center with physical or knowledge-based assets, integrated into the EBRAINS digital platform. A LSP will:
  - Be a member of its National Node
  - Offer accessory services integrated into EBRAINS.
  - Ensure compliance with interoperability, data harmonization, and FAIR principles.
  - Enter into Accessory Service Level Agreements with EBRAINS, specifying reimbursement and service delivery expectations.
  - Being integrated into the EBRAINS digital platform, or committed to achieve the necessary technological maturity to do so.
  - Participate in LSPE working groups and collaborative initiatives.
  - Join other LSPs in cooperative funding calls. Monitoring call opportunities, application and coordination falls under the responsibility of the applying LSPs, not of the EBRAINS EDIC, whose role is one of an endorsing partner.
- **National Node (NN):** A country-level network of institutions, including but not limited to LSPs, contributing to EBRAINS, represented by a Node Leader and governed by a National Node Agreement. NN must:
  - Coordinate and represent national-level participation in EBRAINS.
  - interact with external observers, as defined by the LSPE position paper.
  - Monitor their national funding environment for opportunities for collaborative funding calls, including ones that necessitate international cooperation.
  - Support the coordinated actions of LSPs that choose to apply to collaborative funding calls.
  - When necessary, support national LSPs in forming a Joint Research Unit Agreement, or any other forms of agreement, to formalise the partnership between multiple institutions.
  - Mediate interactions between EBRAINS EDIC and national institutions.
- **Accessory Service Level Agreement (ASLA):** A documented agreement detailing the scope, conditions, and reimbursement model of services, signed between EBRAINS and each individual LSP.
  - LSPs may voluntarily support EBRAINS services without expectation of compensation or do so through a reimbursement agreement.
  - Reimbursement models will cover personnel, consumables, and overhead, with no profit margin.
  - Services offered to the private sector (e.g., industry, commercial R&D) may be charged on a fee-for-service basis.
  - A standardized reporting framework will be implemented for tracking and transparency.
  - LSPs retain autonomy and may offer services outside of EBRAINS, with no exclusivity clauses.

## 5. Sustainability

EBRAINS EDIC is not expected to directly financially compensate the LSPs for the delivery of services. However, such services may still be costly in terms of personnel, resources and time, and therefore not sustainable in the long term without a way to recuperate expenses.

Service can be offered to EBRAINS in one of the following ways:

- **voluntary, free of charge.** The LSP volunteers its capabilities for the delivery of a service to EBRAINS, or to support an existing EBRAINS service, under no expectation of being compensated by EBRAINS, financially or otherwise. The final service delivery to the user through the digital platform or in other fashion, is the sole responsibility of EBRAINS EDIC. Exclusivity clauses for service delivery between EBRAINS and LSPs are not allowed.
- **reimbursement, no profit.** As an EDIC, EBRAINS, and in turn the collaborating LSP, cannot profit from the delivery of services to the final users. The LSP can however budget in advance the expected expenses of the service delivery, and receive a compensation for the service in a form of reimbursement. This reimbursement can either be paid by EBRAINS itself or through the access to EU funding calls. This reimbursement cannot surpass the effective expenses incurred by the LPS during the delivery of the service, therefore avoiding that either EBRAINS or the LSP gain a profit from the delivery. The final service delivery to the user through the digital platform or in other fashion, is both the responsibility of EBRAINS EDIC and the LSPs. Exclusivity clauses for service delivery between EBRAINS and LSPs are not allowed.
- **fee for the private sector.** EBRAINS and LSPs are allowed to profit and charge fees of their choosing when delivering services to private entities. EBRAINS, LPSs and any other entity sign a dedicated Service Level Agreement (to be distinct from the usual ASLA signed between EBRAINS and LSPs) establishing timelines, deliverables, terms of services and financial compensation. The responsibility for the final service delivery to the user through the digital platform or in other fashion, is determined by this Service Level Agreement. Exclusivity clauses for service delivery may be included in this case.

The LSP can freely choose its preferred form of service delivery depending on the case. The form of service delivery between EBRAINS EDIC and a LSP is further detailed by the SLA between the two, and subject to changes according to the terms of such agreement.

## 6. LSPE Governance and Coordination

The LSPE is coordinated by an Assembly, composed of representatives from each LSP. In addition to acting as a coordination unit, the Assembly elects a Chair, who acts as a representative for the whole LSPE. The Chair interfaces with the EBRAINS EDIC and will be part of one of the EDIC boards once the EDIC consolidates. The Chair position lasts 3 years, after which a new Chair is appointed in the same way.

The LSPE Assembly is responsible for:

- the admission of prospective LSPs into the LSPE.
- organising Regular working group meetings, both virtual and physical, organized around thematic areas (e.g., training, FAIR data, sustainability).
- Documenting outputs and supporting knowledge sharing.
- Drafting standardized templates for Service Level Agreements, reporting, budgeting, application from perspective LSPs, and more.
- Updating the membership and participation in the LSPE, keeping an updated catalogues of service capabilities to better identify
- Monitoring the European funding environment for opportunities for collaborative international calls on projects.

## 7. Other Terms of Agreement.

- Access to LSPE services is subject to approval by the host LSP and compliance with EBRAINS General Terms of Use.
- Project proposals may be submitted using standard LSPE templates.
- Accepted projects will be governed by ASLA or JRU agreements as appropriate.
- EBRAINS retains the right to update access policies in coordination with the LSPE.
- Prospective LSPs may request admission by submitting a capability profile and demonstrating technical readiness through a standardized application form, developed by the LSPE Assembly.
- Approval is contingent on integration into the EBRAINS digital platform and endorsement by the relevant NN.
- Exit from the LSPE or termination of SLA must be formally communicated and may occur at any time if agreed responsibilities are not met.

## 8. Signatures

# Memorandum of Understanding “Enlarged EBRAINS Local Service Providers Ecosystem”

### **BETWEEN**

EBRAINS EDIC

And

Participating Local Service Provider (LSP)  
Participating Local Service Provider (LSP)  
Participating Local Service Provider (LSP)

And

National Node Representative (NNs)  
National Node Representative (NNs)  
National Node Representative (NNs)

DATE and PLACE

Signed on the behalf of the parties:

[PLACE], 00/00/0000  
For [Participating Local Service Provider]  
Legal Representative  
[Name and Surname]

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[PLACE], 00/00/0000  
For [Participating Local Service Provider]  
Legal Representative  
[Name and Surname]

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[PLACE], 00/00/0000  
For [Participating Local Service Provider]  
Legal Representative  
[Name and Surname]

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